

REMARKS

Claims 1-31 are pending. Claims 1, 22 and 31 have been amended to further define Applicant's invention. Claims 1, 22 and 31 are in independent form. Favorable reconsideration and allowance of the subject application are respectfully requested in view of the following comments.

Claim 1 has been amended by noting that the core is essentially solid. Claims 22 and 31 have similarly been amended to indicate that the granular cores are essentially solid. Support for these amendments can be found, for example, on page 5, line 18 of the specification. As such, no new matter has been introduced by way of this amendment.

Claims 1-31 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as allegedly being obvious over European Patent Document No. EP0334617 ("*Goodacre et al.*"). Applicant respectfully traverses these rejections, in view of the comments set forth below.

Among the noteworthy features of the sweetener composition recited in amended Claim 1 is an essentially solid core including a nutritive sweetener.

Goodacre et al. discloses sweetener compositions comprising hollow spheroids or part spheroids of microcrystalline sucrose, generally bound to crystals of sucrose, and preferably containing one or more high intensity sweeteners.

In contrast, Applicant's invention as set forth in Claim 1 has an essentially solid core. As such, Claim 1 is patentable over *Goodacre et al.*

Like Claim 1, Claims 22 and 31 recite that the granular cores are essentially solid. For at least the reasons stated above for Claim 1, Claims 22 and 31 are patentable over *Goodacre et al.*

The remaining claims directly or indirectly depend from Claims 1, 22 or 31. These claims are also believed to be patentable over *Goodacre et al.*, since they depend from a patentable base claim.

In view of the foregoing remarks, Applicant respectfully requests favorable reconsideration and allowance of the claims in the present application.

Applicant's undersigned attorney may be reached in our office by telephone at (732) 524-1767. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below listed address.

If any fees are due in connection with the filing of this Response, authorization is hereby given to charge the amount of such fee to Deposit Account No. 10-0750/MSP5011NP/VT in the name of Johnson & Johnson.

Respectfully submitted,

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